

## AGM - 18th September 2018 Report from chair - Huw Jenkins

I would like to begin this report by saying how (relatively) easy you have all made my first year as the society's chair. You have supported the society well. It has also I feel, using any measure, been a very successful year.

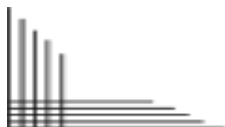
Bach's Christmas Oratorio was a bold choice on Andrew's part. For some of us I know the German felt a struggle but it was well worth it and the results were outstanding. Possibly one of our best recruiting aids at the moment is the recording of the start of this concert. It's on the website - share it with potential singing or audience members. It always seems a short time from the Autumn concert to the Christmas one and this year was no exception. It is very easy for choral society Christmas concerts to become somewhat hackneyed. Andrew does do a great job of keeping these fresh and interesting and last year's concert also benefited again from J50's contribution.

In March we went to Standon and coupled the ever-popular Faure Requiem with motets by Durufle and Bruckner. These are taxing but again the choir rose to the challenge extremely well. Hugh Reid from Haileybury and our own Olivia Tomkins were the soloists in the Faure and performed beautifully. It was good to hear the ever-dependable Michael Smith as a soloist and not just a rock-solid accompanist. The contrasting moods of the 3 Orgelbuchlein Chorale preludes enhanced the concert considerably and contrasted well with the motets.

We ended the year at Barkway and performed to a very appreciative audience. Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music was the piece to test us at that concert, but again we gave a very credible performance of it. It was a perfect foil to the somewhat more straightforward Sprig of Thyme by Rutter. Alistair Watson (who some of us remembered from Andrew's first concert with us) was a wonderful accompanist as well contributing a virtuosic solo performance of a Bach Toccata. The concert ended on a suitably joyous and light-hearted note with a couple of Ken Burton Spiritual arrangements.

So musically a great year. I won't steal Caroline's thunder in talking about the financial situation other than to thank on behalf of all of us Carole Kaszak for her tenacity and success at the grant application process. Thank you very much Carole - it made all the difference.

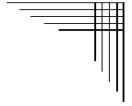
So, to the nag that was threatened (promised?) in the 'welcome back' email. We are not selling enough tickets. We were just short of 200 for the Christmas Oratorio, but that dropped to 115 at Christmas and was around 120 in Standon and somewhat lower at Barkway. Those numbers don't really do justice to the amount of work we all put in week by week, and certainly don't reflect the standard and quality of the performances we put on. Please can we all make a concerted effort to sell at least 3 tickets for every concert in this coming season? It will make all the difference. Not only will we be looking out on more crowded venues (and that will lift the performance) but it will allow us to continue with our current level of ambitious programmes. We cannot rely on grant money to bail us out going forward.



# Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

[www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](http://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)



At the start, I thanked you all for the support over the year. I want to particularly reiterate my thanks to all the committee who have rallied round, accepted some changes and generally 'got stuff done'. What is even better they are all happy to continue doing it. At the risk of embarrassing them, I must particularly mention by name, Caroline, for all the work she does with the finances, music and general know-how; Jenny, for the excellent work on publicity the quality of the up-front work on which which was particularly useful given issues with the printers and designer; Suzi, for finding advertisers and the associated income; and Heather, for not only taking on the role of concert manager but also organising a couple of enjoyable social evenings over the year. The committee, though, has been without a secretary all year which has at times been challenging. Is there anyone out there that would be prepared to take that role on?

Not part of the committee, but Janet Backer and everyone that make teas week by week deserve the thanks of us all. The refreshment break is one of our chances to socialise and I think does help to bond us as a choir. I, of course, also extend this thanks to those who bake for the open rehearsal each term. This really helps to add to the welcome.

During the year David Heinzelmann stepped down from the role of front of house manager for the concerts. He had done the role diligently for a number of years and was thanked by the committee at the time but it is good to record our thanks here as well. This is a role we must fill to ensure concerts run smoothly. It is best performed not by a singing member, so if any of you have friends or partners who might consider taking this on please do talk to me.

Finally on the subject of thanks, we are very lucky to have such capable deputies as Michael and Richard to stand in for Andrew when he is unavailable. Thank you both very much. It was perhaps a particularly onerous year for this with Andrew succumbing to psittacosis, although as an excuse to miss rehearsals that really does take some beating! We were of course all very pleased to see the speedy and full recovery once the correct diagnosis had been made!

It is with great sadness that I record the death of Peter Murray just after the end of the society's year. Peter had been a stalwart member of the society and its committee for decades. He did a lot in his own quiet unassuming way. We will miss him greatly and it was good that the society was well represented at his funeral.

Looking to the future I want to leave you with three thoughts:

- I have already mentioned the issue of ticket sales and 'bums on seats'.
- I also think it would be good to grow the choir just slightly - but primarily in the tenor and bass divisions. A slightly better balance here would help programming. However with choir numbers in general if we grow more than slightly over our current numbers we are going to have a problem finding suitable venues to perform in.
- Finally in time for the St John Passion concert I think we need to look again at our staging for the orchestra. Any help and ideas in this department would be welcome.

